



9-2009

With and Against: Architecture Jazz Mondrian

Charles Mark Draper

University of Tennessee - Knoxville

Recommended Citation

Draper, Charles Mark, "With and Against: Architecture Jazz Mondrian. " Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 2009.
https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/74

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Charles Mark Draper entitled "With and Against: Architecture Jazz Mondrian." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture, with a major in Architecture.

Brian Ambroziak, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Gregor Kalas, Jared Sprecher

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Gregor Kalas, Secondary Professor

Jared Sprecher, Secondary Professor

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges
Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

WITH AND AGAINST: Architecture Jazz Mondrian

a thesis presented
for the Master's of Architecture Degree
College of Architecture + Design
University of Tennessee

chuck. draper
August 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am forever indebted to all of those involved in this process. Firstly my committee members: Jered Sprecher, Dr. Gregor Kalas, and the incomparable Brian Ambroziak. Endless thanks. Without these brilliant minds the end of my time at university would have been a footnote. Instead this has been the most rewarding and fulfilling experience.

Also a note of thanks to the University of Tennessee Knoxville and the School of Architecture's faculty and administration. A beautiful thing, the loveliest of all.

This is for you, you know who you are.

Bea, Charlie, Madge, Donald, Millie, Mark, Alan, Ron, John, Gabe, Miles.

And especially for you Bethany.

This will be our year, took a long time to come.

ABSTRACT

My thesis centers around the painter Piet Mondrian and a prophetic position that he held at the end of his life that architecture and painting could be united sometime in the future through the introduction of sound, namely jazz music. This is a test if a synthesis between art, architecture, site, space, content, and structure can be elicited by the infusion of jazz, rhythm, arhythmos, and syncopation. The metaphorical aspect of synthesis is imperative for the current state of art and architecture and ultimately a bridge between sensory inputs and a sensorial unconscious can be reduced to a larger analogy of a bridge between the body and the soul.

Drummer Art Blakey said, "Jazz is known all over the world as an American musical art form and that's it. No America, no Jazz."

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fig. 01 Mondrian with his vinyl records
source : Blotkamp, 1994.

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Let us start with a few misconceptions, the first being a grave error on my part and taken for granted by most in a discussion of Mondrian. This was made clear to myself, in a short article on Mondrian, written by the painter Bridget Riley. As she points out the term for which we most commonly associate Mondrian, “neo-plasticism” comes from an apt translation though it may be somewhat misleading. The original Dutch term, *Nieuwe Beelding*, translates most directly into English as New Plastic. Plasticity being a word that is so very loaded and American, as in “plastics, my boy, plastics.” This word, while seldom used in art or architecture, is often understood as a malleable intention for sculptural ends but this is not the case for the Dutch word *beelding*. Mondrian makes this distinction in his early text of 1917 where he lays out a process of form-making, which emphasizes construction, or rather to put something with and against something. This distinction is at the very core of what I would like to get out of this investigation into the writings and works of Piet Mondrian. I wish to suss out what I have misread, and the complexity that marks a master such as Mondrian but is continually looked over with a somewhat Greenburgian, selective reading of his life’s works.

Regarding Mondrian, Naum Gabo: “he was against space. Once he was showing me a painting... ‘My goodness!’ I said, ‘you are still painting that one?’ I had seen it much earlier, ‘The white is not flat enough,’ he said. He thought there was still too much space in the white, and he denied any variations of color. His ideas were very clear. He thought a painting must be flat, and that color should never show any indication of space... My argument was, ‘You can go on forever, but you will never succeed.’” (Blotkamp, 2001)

So how does one begin to write on a connection to architecture stemming from a theoretician and painter who was clearly against space? This is an obstacle that I personally have been confounded by time and time again. Surely, I thought, there must be some underlying connection that exists in the ether mystically connecting the built world with a man who saw space at it’s most eloquent in the two-dimensional. I rested on the notion that he was against pictorial space and that was fine and good, that it was merely a rejection of representational space. Though time and time again this stumbling block presents itself and it is a seemingly unsurpassable hurdle. As it turns out I was wrong and right at the same time and Naum Gabo’s argument for Mondrian could be applied

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to my own attempt to dismiss this anti-space position that Mondrian holds. Though the realization of the implications of the Dutch word *beelding* meanings towards construction with and against something leaves some room to discuss architectural space within a context of Mondrian.

Though very distinct from architecture the term is inherently architectural. This type of construction that he is setting out early and building upon for the rest of his life is akin to architectural form in that architecture absorbs its own constructive elements. A piece of architecture no matter how revelatory of its tectonic assemblage will always to some degree hide within itself the constructed elements in tension and compression. Mondrian's painting just as modern architecture sought to reveal the inner structuring. This is not as simple as revealing the process of painting or how the object was made, which is important. The further a painting could be purified of space the more that it could relate the resolution of weight, tensions, and pressures of the internal compositional forces. Continuing with this sort of purification of the picture plane, a painting could approach the level of the immaculate if these constructive elements could not only be revealed but could become expressive in their own right.

This understanding of the term *beelding* leaves much headroom for architecture to enter the discussion, but however profound it does not fully connect the works of the painter to architectural discourse. Further more as one looks for those who have made a connection between Mondrian and modern architecture the comparisons often fall flat and are merely formal in nature. The use of primary colors does not tether a piece of architecture to the works of Mondrian in any substantial way, and paintings are not necessarily windows and Mondrian's black bars should never be confused with mullions. Charimon von Wiegand, a later close friend and proponent of Mondrian even said, "When I first looked at Mondrian's paintings, I found them bare but beautifully proportioned designs. I could see their use for industry, for typography, for decoration, but I could not understand why he considered himself a painter." (Bois, 1987) This is very telling of a common utilitarian reading of a Mondrian and it undoubtedly is owed to the Bauhaus, where analogy rules out any distinction of materiality, context, or scale. The architect most associated with Mondrian and card carrying member of the De Stijl movement, Gerrit Rietveld warns against morphological transformation of

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Mondrian's painting into architecture. Curiously the two never met, a fact that he is clear to point out. Though Rietveld does acknowledge a direct influence on the Schröder House from Mondrian, but he adds, "I see in every direct application of the compositions of Mondrian to architecture the danger of a rapid shift to decorative prettiness, and this precisely by the very analytical beginnings of De Stijl." (Bois, 1987) Rietveld is stressing that from the outset De Stijl was founded on the premise of analytical separation of the different realms of the plastic arts, namely: painting, sculpture, and architecture. "At the epoch of De Stijl," wrote Rietveld, "one did not speak of a translation of pictorial experience into architecture; on the contrary, one spoke of the separation of space, color, and form as the point of departure for the analysis." (Bois, 1987)

There is a clear connection and disconnect between the Neo-Plastic works of Mondrian and the field of architecture which harkens back to that peculiar Dutch word *beelding* that stands for something simultaneously with and against something. And no singular figure makes this point more articulate and muddy at the same time than Mondrian himself. In 1942 in an autobiography to accompany Mondrian's first one-man show in New York Mondrian wrote, "Modern architecture and industry responded to our influence, but painting and sculpture were little affected." This would seem to bolster a superficial use of neo-plasticism in the field of architecture but it is a sly declaration and critique, which he follows up by saying, "They seemed to fear that Neo-Plasticism might lead to 'decoration.' Actually there was no reason for this fear in pure plastic art any more than any other art expression. All art becomes 'decoration' when depth of expression is lacking." Mondrian had always had a great disdain for the applied arts and continued in his catalogue, "While Neo-Plasticism now has its own intrinsic value, as a painting or sculpture, it may be considered as a preparation for a future architecture." (Bois, 1987)

For Mondrian neo-plasticism is a set of principles that is above any one field of application. A neo-plastic painting is a painting and a sculpture a sculpture, but as he saw it, neo-plasticism had never been properly applied to architecture, but rather laid the groundwork's for an architecture that could not be realized in the current timeframe. As early as 1922 Mondrian wrote, "What was achieved in art must for the present be limited to art. Our external environment cannot yet be realized as the pure plastic expression of harmony." Throughout his life Mondrian

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complements modern achievements in architecture with not-so passive aggressive tendencies. For instance, he says the work of Le Corbusier, "was already beautiful... in comparison with other works... already very great in this epoch, but it is not the apogee of our culture!" (Bois, 1987) He says similar disparaging remarks on many architects, many of them friends and in some cases such as his relationship with Oud, severing ties for years at a time. It is curious though that he always excludes the works of Rietveld from any judgment calls.

Mondrian also rails against pure function or as his one time counterpart in the De Stijl movement, Theo Van Doesburg would call, "adoration of function." Though he precedes Le Corbusier in the L'Espirit Nouveau, by stating that the engineer is (without knowing it) in advance of the artist. In his volume *Natural Reality and Abstract Reality*, which is written as a trialogue between X, a naturalistic painter; and Y, a layman; and Z, an abstract-real (neo-plastic) painter.

Mondrian writes, in a manner that would be familiar to most architectural students, "We see pure beauty arising of its own accord in architectural structures built for utility and from necessity; in housing complexes, factories, warehouses, etc. But as soon as 'luxury' enters, on begins to think of 'art' and pure beauty is compromised... So long as we are incapable of conscious aesthetic plastic expression, it is better to devote our attention to utility," he continues in a startlingly familiar tone of Le Corbusier, "A simple drinking cup is beautiful and so is an airplane or an automobile." (Mondrian, 1995) Mondrian is outlining much of the tenets of utilitarian architecture, which is a curious position for one who adamantly rails against the applied arts. This is not the end of the discussion though, however it may have been influential for a functionalist. Mondrian continues, "Utilitarian objects become more beautiful through their basic form, that is, in themselves. Yet they are nothing in themselves: they become part of the architecture through their form and color." (Mondrian, 1995) Mondrian later repudiates utility alone as it may limit beauty. This is so typical of Mondrian, to so fluently ride both sides of an argument. The trialogue of *Natural Reality and Abstract Reality* is emblematic of the multi-personality disorder of the author that is no truer than on the topic of architecture.

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This incessant contradictory posture of Mondrian is symptomatic of an issue that plagued most modern painters and theoreticians and has come up time and time again. That being the end of art. Mondrian like so many others ascribed to the prediction for the future that art will come to an end and there will be no distinction between artist and non-artist. The only plausible end to the evolution of humanity is of course utopia and this is only realized when architecture and art become inseparable thusly no need for paintings and, "Music as art will come to an end. The beauty of the sounds around us- purified, ordered, brought to new harmony- will be satisfying." He see the same fate for sculpture, theater, dance, etc. (Bois, 1987) This stance comes from Hegel by way of the Dutch philosopher G.J.P.J. Bolland the source for neo-plasticist of teleology. The reasons for this utopian vision are many and wrought with flaws and the sort of modernist rhetoric that one would hope their heroes might rise above but they never seem to do. Although he makes an argument in 1919 that may allow us to realize what he might have meant, "Architecture always presupposes enclosure: the building stands out as a thing against space." Here we see that problematic anti-space notion again. The thingness of an object is what neo-plasticism wishes to destroy: "unique beauty is the opposite of what characterizes things as things... Everyone contemplates for its own sake is indeed beautiful, but it has a limited kind of beauty. When we see something as thing-in-itself, we separate it from the whole: opposition is lacking- we no longer see relationships but only color and form." (Bois, 1987)

This is the motif that appears repeatedly in Mondrian's writings: that a thing can only achieve status as itself if it stands with and against itself. In a letter to his friend Oud he relates, "My work does not consist simply in the making of things, it is much vaster than that. Neo-plastic painting is only a substitute for the totality." A picture, "is the most abstract thing possible, the most direct expression of the abstract." (Bois, 1987) He sees all dissolving in the distant future into one neo-plastic totality but for the time being we should still paint and possibly try to make plastic architecture. The only other field he sees as parallel to the realized plasticity in painting is jazz music, but it is still flawed. Another theme of his is that every form of art is imperfect yet perfectible. He sees jazz and especially the boogie woogie variation as coming close but still to linked to tradition within its melodic line. Charmion von Wiegand anecdotally remarks that when Mondrian danced in New York to the rhythm of some boogie-woogie that he would quickly stop and take his

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seat when the melody became too clear. (Bois, 1987) Lee Krasner, the painter and wife of Jackson Pollock recalls dancing with Mondrian as if he “danced vertically.” (Blotkamp, 1994) Max Bill clarifies the importance of the orthogonal, “We have become accustomed to seeing pictures as rectangular planes parallel to the wall limits of normal rooms. Mondrian capitalized on this rectangular perception and made it the basic principle of his paintings... A horizontal- vertical structure accords with a horizontal- vertical environment.”(Rose, 2006)

Mondrian continually called for the destructive element in art and this can be traced through his evolution as a painter. From pictorial interest through abstraction to what can be referred to as his neo- plastic works which dominated his works for the longest part of his career from 1920 until the second world war. Living in Paris and witnessing the atrocities of the war Mondrian grows despondent and after being forced to flee to London fearing Nazi occupation of Paris he experiences the largest lull of his feverishly productive life. While in London he produces next to nothing. Then a shift happens as he moves to New York. He is set up by friends and patrons at first in an apartment on 56th street and then finally at his well documented studio and apartment at 15 E 59th street. He arrives in New York while there is resurgence in the popularity of a relatively new art form Boogie-woogie. Mondrian had long been acquainted with jazz and music in general at times naming his paintings after dances such as the Foxtrot. Though it is here in New York inspired by the verve of the city and its grid that Mondrian truly embraces music and jazz and the collision that takes place with his paintings and space. He acknowledges that boogie woogie is the only art form on par with neo-plasticism. Boogie woogie being based on a twelve bar blues where repetition and rhythm dominate melody or chordal structures he sees the freeing possibilities of the rhythmic art and infuses them into his paintings.

He carefully reworks seventeen canvases that he has brought with him. Some of them have already been exhibited yet in his continual process of evolution, he reworks the canvas producing startling new elements to his self-imposed limited vocabulary of visual elements. A formula that had served him well his whole mature life was to compose blocks of primary colors always hedged in by black lines. (Blotkamp, 1994)

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The canvases were simultaneously the most self-contained and the most extended in their Cartesian geometry. Here in New York for the first time after arriving at the neo-plastic doctrine that he had so strictly adhered to he breaks his own rules by letting color stand alone no longer bound by black line. This dismantles his objectives and sends the picture plane reeling with interplay of figure and ground not seen before in his works. Where as he sees his earlier works as now too strictly in the realm of drawing he purposely destroys his own idioms in an attempt to as he calls it give them more boogie woogie. This culminates in a few new canvases towards the end of his life where color is not only freed of line but also becomes line further subverting the picture plane. Most of these remain unfinished but not due to lack of work. In fact his last canvas Victory Boogie Woogie as seen on the easel in his studio after his death, had been continually painted and modified. Holtzman asks the painter why he doesn't produce an entire new series instead of re-working the same canvas infinitely. Mondrian responds that he is no longer interested in objects but he prefers figuring things out. The compositions spill out into the living space in continually staged and refined colored paper on the walls and calculated placement of furniture, ashtrays, and a plastic rose painted white. All of this is prophetic for the directions that art would take and much credit is due to New York and the music of the city. As boogie woogie places rhythm at the forefront there is a beatification of the beat and in Mondrian's studio there is a beatification of the wall.

In Paris Mondrian attends a futurist concert where Luigi Russolo used "sound machines" as an avant garde attempt at even freer form and composition than boogie-woogie. Mondrian is excited by the potential and writes several articles on the topic of music in neo-plasticism. He lauds the concert as a close attempt. The machines produce strange new sounds not familiar to traditional instruments and they include "noise" as a tonal concept. But for Mondrian they are still too based in reality, "It is abundantly clear from names such as shriekers, buzzers, cracklers, squeakers, gobblers, blowers, howlers, and croakers that the sound produced by the bruiteurs is suspiciously reminiscent of the natural reality of music." ((Blotkamp, 1994)

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In New York Mondrian became increasingly preoccupied with jazz and architecture. But in his studio possibly anticipating his death and consequent cataloguing of his affairs there is no tracery. No books, no records found, letters were read and then burned, and the studio he left behind is surely not the one he lived in. There is a back from the grave stoicism that can be seen as somehow fraudulent for he must have read books and kept records. Mondrian taunts the historian by leaving nothing behind. Nothing in his apartment or personal life that could impede or interfere with his plastic life. (Cooper,2001)

The connection of Mondrian's development from naturalism to abstraction and then a pure abstract art form can be traced by two typifying changes in his work and then their abandonment and destruction. First, the introduction of the modular, which according to Bois, "has the advantage of diminishing, or better still, of equalizing any contrast, preventing any individuation and abolishing the figure/ background opposition." Though this denied the surface of the painting as flatness with no surface inscription. The grid for Mondrian takes a good two years before it is completely rejected by the painter. (Bois,1998) Secondly, the grid with its fixed surface integrity, affords hierarchy, rhythm, and repetition. All of these terms for Mondrian are synonymous with symmetry and thusly naturalism, which is of course what the new plastic arts were attempting to disband in art. "Neoplasticism was born out of this double rejection. And it is from a return to these two highly contradictory symbolic forms (depth and repetition) that New York City was composed. In describing the all-over structure of the painting... the dialectic of repetition/ symmetry that most critics, following Mondrian himself, have compared to the musical rhythms of boogie-woogie." (Bois, 1998) Not limited or formal the free rhythm of jazz is universal, not particular. Mondrian disassociated rhythm from repetition, which he concluded as individual. He seeks to destroy symmetry or similitude in his works and rails against it but over time the discourse is quieted by the notion of dynamic equilibrium. "The immediate plastic translation of this notion was as follows: lines, until that time considered secondary to planes (their only function being the "determination" of those planes), became the most active element of composition. Mondrian quickly began to assign a destructive function to the line." (Bois,1998) Again reasserting the role of the destructive element Mondrian writes, "The rectangular planes (formed by the plurality of straight lines...) are dissolved by their homogeneity and rhythm alone emerges leaving the planes as 'nothing' (Holtzman, 1993)

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Driven by the rhythmic and broken by arhythmos, jazz also becomes formless. Melody and harmony succumb to the percussive. The beatification of the beat is the generative force but is only seen as freeing in relation to the other elements. Syncopation relies on varying rhythms all coming into play simultaneously and overlapping. A drummer by himself off time is just that, by himself. The only means for identifying the break is the juxtaposition with that is not broken. After the dismantlement of lines the next adversary was for Mondrian form. His strategy is “mutual oppositions” just as in the jazz band. This annihilation is only possible after the acceptance of repetition. Mondrian sees the thingness of an element disappear when that object is doubled and he writes, “The plurality of varied and similar forms annihilates the existence of forms as entities. Similar forms do not show contrast but are in equivalent opposition. Therefore they annihilate themselves more completely in their plurality” (Bois, 1998) This is akin to the notion of the doppelganger from German mythology, where as soon as you encounter your mirrored image in life your death is imminent. Though repetition alone still embodies object and expression of naturalism. Only through syncopated rhythms can elements or forms become formless and in so doing approach a level of pure abstraction. And Mondrian elaborates, “The layering of color itself as abstract color was simultaneous with that of the straight line and of the straight line in a group of straight orthogonal lines, as pure expression of balanced relationships” (Bois, 1998) Mondrian found this balancing act in the only art form that he thought of as equal to neo-plasticism: boogie woogie. Rapid syncopated rhythms at once informed and also intuited and improvised the musical innovations translate directly into his canvases. Process is at the forefront where it has always been a concern of Mondrian’s it is now self evident through the materials he uses such as tapes and a considerable impasto. The revealed brush strokes serve the same role as the slight pause or entasis between the four and the downbeat. “I came to the destruction of volume by the use of the plane. This I accomplished by means of lines cutting the planes. But still the plane remained too intact. So I came to making lines and brought the color within the lines. Now the problem was to destroy these lines through mutual opposition. Perhaps I do not express myself clearly in this, but it may give you some idea of why I left the Cubist influence. True Boogie Woogie I conceive as homogenous in intention with mine in painting. I think the destructive element is too much neglected in art.” - Mondrian (Bois, 1998)

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The connections between Mondrian's development and jazz music are clear and concise on the level of mechanics in the paintings. That is as method and intention they seem homogenous, but that link seems somehow facile if it stands alone. The profundity of Mondrian's interest in music and the destructive element is the involvement of time. Now this is contrary to many Greenburgian and abstract expressionist views of Mondrian, and I myself have often thought of Mondrian in Platonic terms. It is a slippery slope to look to Mondrian as a geometricist who is against space and that his paintings can be taken in all at once. Simon Schama, in a New Yorker article as recent as 1996 follows this precept as he writes, "color planes all need to be seen at once for their meditative harmony to register at once ... Mondrian's art is meant to transcend the material world." (Cooper, 1998) The key to dismantling this view that Mondrian saw the only means to transcend time was to work through it and not simply rise above it. This is from G.J.P.J. Bolland the Dutch ambassador of Hegel and Hegel's critique of Plato. Hegel wrote, "Spirit necessarily appears in Time, so long as it has not grasped its pure Notion, has not annulled Time." Mondrian essentially rewrites this though he changes the emphasis, "Beyond time is the True Reality, we are living in time. We have to reckon with its Changing." (Cooper, 1998) The inclusion of time into Mondrian's equation is inherently linked to architectural theory and spatial definition because temporality only happens within space.

From the final passages of Natural Reality and Abstract Reality, Mondrian confounds the issue of temporality, "Relatively speaking, the room can also be seen (like a painting) as a whole all at once..." This is the face value Mondrian that Greenburg latched onto, but there is more to this as he writes, "We survey the room visually, but inwardly we also see a single image. Thus we perceive all of its planes as a single plane, like a painting." This seems to be congruent with the first statement but a little contentious because he is separating the visual (physical) reality of the room from the inward mind's perception. Then in classic Mondrian manner he negates the earlier statements by writing, "Is it so desirable to see the plastic expression as a whole? Doesn't painting still seem to much a 'thing'?" (Mondrian, 1995) Mondrian is dismantling architecture into an instantaneous single plane in his first statements, but then challenging the single plane of a painting as becoming too much of an object if perceived at once. A singular picture for Mondrian should have as much temporality as a room and a six planed volume of architecture

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can have none. Mondrian concludes, “Isn’t the three-dimensional unity of the wall surfaces precisely a means whereby we may move in several dimensions inwardly, that is, more deeply.” (Mondrian, 1995)

This twofold contradictory stance of Mondrian’s only deals with planarity and he returns to architectural discourse to condemn the volumetric faults of architecture because volume is bound by perspective. Perspectival space is of course one of the chief function of the vision of the past, which Neo-Plasticism seeks to annihilate. Mondrian elaborates on the problem of the perspective, “The new vision does not proceed from one fixed viewpoint: it takes its viewpoint everywhere and is not limited to one position. It is not bound by space or time. Practically it takes its position in front of the plane. Thus it regards multiplicity of planes: once more the plane.” (Bois, 1987) It is no wonder with blatant contradictions such as this that Mondrian’s contributions to architectural theory are perceived as obtuse and confounding. Nonetheless he adds to this position in 1925 in an article he delivered to *L’Architecture vivante*, “... thus the work of architecture appears as a multiplicity of planes, not prisms, as in ‘volumetric construction.’ Nor is there any danger in lapsing into ‘façade-architecture,’ it ubiquitous point of view prevents this error.” (Bois, 1987) This is not only contradictory to all accepted schools of thought on twentieth century architecture it also seems deliberately contrary. Though this does not negate an application of Mondrian’s theoretical writings to architecture it just makes it harder.

When Mondrian writes about space and time, like so many other early modernist, he is referring to the theory of relativity. Though his interpretation differs from his contemporaries understanding of the theory. Mondrian’s interest in space and time is in duality and mutual opposition. He never calls for a space-time continuum, instead he wishes to acknowledge them as separate entities that converge but can be understood as separate. Space-time was not the role of any one art but only applicable when two or more collided, such as the colored panels of the interior studio walls and the paintings on the easel coexisting. This reifies his preoccupation with jazz as a temporal art rather than spatial changes and tensions relate in time but not necessarily mark time. This is all obtuse and seemingly disparate but Mondrian elucidates when in 1931 he writes about, “An International Museum of Contemporary Art.” The museum as he conceives it, would be a museum to follow a series of galleries tracing the history of art to of course Neo-Plasticism. In the

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museum, “painting and sculpture will be realized by the interior itself: dissolved as separate objects and projected directly into life. Thus, neo-plastic architecture and chromaplastic are shown as a unity determining everything in the room, and demonstrating that what is lost for art is gained for life.” This gallery would be a separate building from the rest in the complex and could be programmed as a lecture hall or a restaurant: then the final say he sees the room as a bar with an American jazz band. (Brown, 2007)

He describes this room in “Jazz and the Neo-Plastic.” He links neo-plastic painting and jazz through their form-generative properties, “They do not destroy the actual content of form: they only deepen form and annihilate it in favor of a new order. Breaking the limitations of ‘form as particularity,’ they make universal unity possible.” This is the manifestation he sees as the possibility for neo-plasticism to be realized in the future of architecture. This is not a utopian vision where sound is music and nothing and everything is art. Instead this is an identifiable, programmed space, with a clientele, which he describes as the “more sublimated culture.” The source of the equilibrium of the room is not planar or volumetric which is where he time and time again finds consummate problems with architecture. Equilibrium here is achieved actually by no visual means at all but by musical ends. “Jazz above all creates the bar’s open rhythm... The structure, the lighting, the advertisements- even in their disequilibrium- serve to complete the jazz rhythm. All ugliness is transcended by jazz and light.” “Everything in the bar moves, and at the same time is at rest. Continuous action holds passion in check. The bottles and glasses on the shelves stand still, yet they move in color and sound and light.” Mondrian finishes by saying that jazz rhythm annihilates. Everything that opens has an annihilating action. This frees rhythm from form and so much that is form without ever being recognized as such. Thus a haven is created for those who would be free of form.” (Brown, 2007)

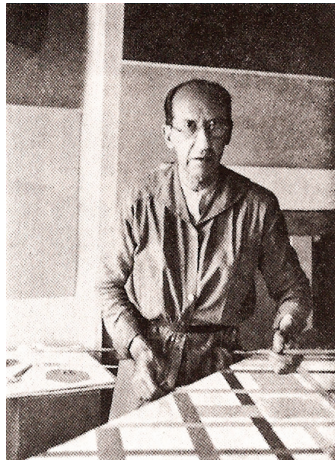
This is the key to a relation of architecture and Neo-Plasticism, that the two separate entities can be linked with the introduction of a third art-form: jazz. This connection is only possible when their intentions are the same. Mondrian wished to make their directions the same, “Jazz and Neo-Plasticism are already creating an environment in which art and philosophy resolve into rhythm that has no form and is therefore ‘open’.” The shift from representation, which is the realm of the volumetric and

MONDRIAN AND BOOGIE

perspectival space towards abstraction and precisely pure abstraction, which is against space, the destructive action eliminates closed form. Once closed form is removed from the equation a deeper state of objectivity is achieved with open forms which enable people to let go of the “thingness” of things themselves and in place of object or objectivity the viewer is allowed to focus on the relationships, the tensions and orders, between things. Mondrian predicts at the end of this journey a utopian vision where, “man will be able to live by intuition: all ‘thinking-and-feeling-in-form’ will dissolve into the unity of deepened emotions and intellect.” (Brown, 2007)

The prospect of this is beautiful, though it has an end. Just as the 78 rpm records of his time were limited to three minute versions of this open-ended form. When the music stops so does the traveling that the listener engages. This transcendent experience will surely come to a corporeal end as the dancer sits at the end of the song or when the melody becomes too identifiable, but the lessons inherent will remain with the dancer long after the evening ends. Just as the boogie-woogie on the recorded format is impeded by time constrictions whereas live it can continue for all purposes indefinitely, Mondrian points out the role of architecture in this equation is also limited to the interior, “What was achieved in art must be for the present limited to art. Our external environment cannot yet be realized as the pure expression of plastic harmony.” For “open-form” to exist in architecture, the architecture must be a “closed-form” separate from its context and space time continuum. Temporality as it applies to Neo-Plastic painting also applies to the extension of architecture to architecture as environment, where art and architecture dissolve into life. The far off future and utopia that Mondrian predicts will never be realized, and nor should it, for the lessons of improvisation in music can mend the vast discrepancies between “with and against,” they do not lead to a transcendent end but more a transcendent moment. As Ratte puts it, “Not only is improvised music a process seeking to go beyond its incoherencies, and finding in this an expression of coherence: it is also a music whose incoherencies critically confront any attempt to go beyond incoherence in a schematic way.” Or as Jacques Attali states, “To compose (improvise) is to stay repetition and the death inherent in it, in other words, to locate liberation not in a faraway future, either sacred or material, but in the present, in production and in one’s enjoyment.” (Brown, 2007)

PAINTING AS PROPHECY



*fig. 02, Mondrian applying tape to Victory
Boogie Woogie*
source : Blotkamp, 1994.

PAINTING AS PROPHECY

JANUARY 1944

10 January: working on Victory Boogie Woogie, von Wiegand.” he had painted the white in it and it had that luminous, living quality of the original conception on a new level of development.” The painting is nearing a finished state, Mondrian asks him as he is leaving if the lower left needs work.

19 January: Mondrian has dinner with Holtzman and discuss plans for an ideal nightclub. Another friend, Holty oges up to Mondrian’s studio and leaves at four in the morning and Mondrian is still working.

21 January: Mondrian shows the painting in its final taped state to Holtzman and says, “ Now I just have to paint it.”

23 January: Sert, the architect who lives in the same building, stops by to find Mondrian with a cold but still working in his pajamas.

26 January: Glarner, another close friend stops by to find Mondrian deathly ill. He is taken to the hospital with severe pneumonia. von Wiegand comes by the apartment and the canvas which had been nearly devoid of tapes on the seventeenth is “ now covered once again with small tapes and looked as though he had been working on it in a fever and with great intensity.”

Between 17 and 23 January the 72 year old completely reworks the canvas while deathly ill from pneumonia with a fireplace that is covered to preserve the purity of the space. He dies the morning of the February first. (Blotkamp, 2001)

PAINTING AS PROPHECY

“To show that this end is only a beginning, it is essential that ... the series of galleries be followed by a room in which painting and sculpture will be realized by the interior itself... demonstrating that what is lost for art is gained for life. This room could therefore be designed for use as a lecture hall, a restaurant...

as a bar with an American Jazz band.” - Mondrian
(Blotkamp, 2001)

“I feel that the late works, the Boogie-Woogies, are transitions to something that God did not let him wait to accomplish + a step in advance but a step that was unsure and tentative.”

- MacDonald Wright (Blotkamp, 2001)

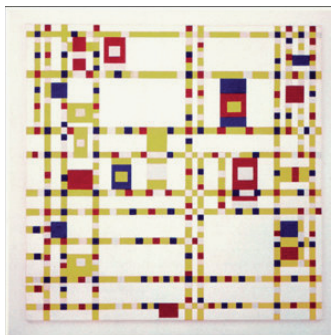


fig. 03 *Broadway Boogie Woogie*
Mondrian 1942-43
source : Bois, 1994.

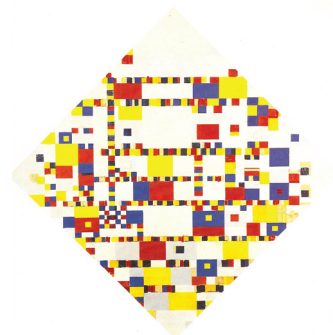


fig. 04, *Victory Boogie Woogie*,
Mondrian 1942-44
source : Bois, 1994.

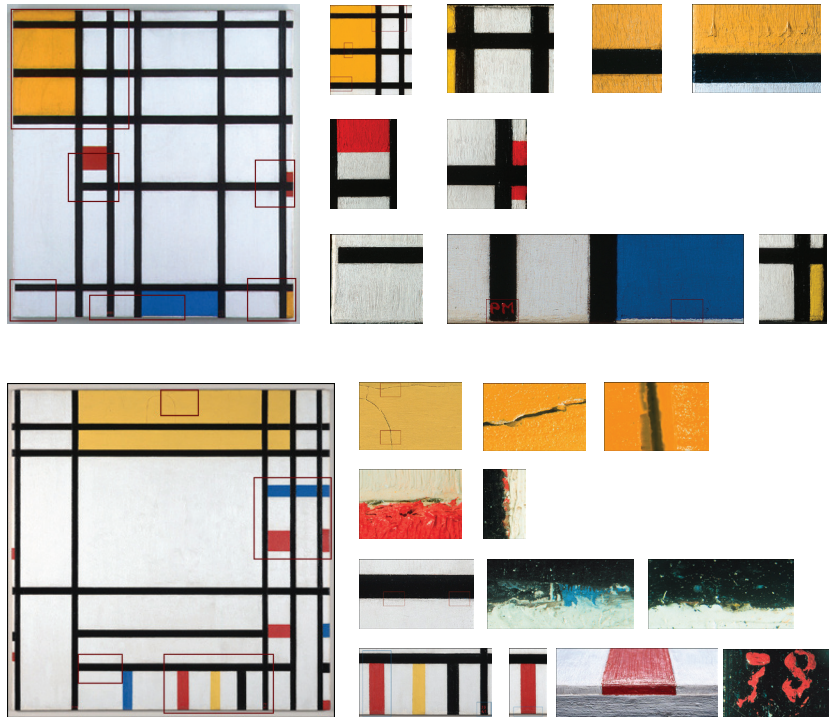
PENTIMENTO AS DETECTIVE

PENTIMENTO AS DETECTIVE

Mondrian asserted time and again that his painting process was about intuition rather than geometric purity. There is a set of archaeological proofs. Harry Cooper, the leading obsessive compulsive scholar on the subject, has surgically traced the developments of the transatlantic canvases, through a series of radiographs, x-rays, micro-photography, and re-creations from photos of the paintings in their earlier stages. (Cooper, 2001)

These investigations are at times a little more than self-indulgent, but there is a lesson in the midst of it all. After countless scholarly efforts to codify the proportioning or mathematic systems of Mondrian all efforts fail and become null. These investigations reveal the subtle yet rich painterly qualities of these canvases. Also they point out the anything but systematic way in which they were applied. What is left is a solved mystery of perhaps the most calculating artist of our times relying on nothing but pure painterly composition. Pentimento translates quite literally to mean, "the artist's repentance." It is a term used by painters to describe hidden layers of paint or work that reveal a shift or change in the work. Though that is technically what we are dealing with, varying cracked yellows and slivers of blue, I think it would be wrong to think of these moves as repentance. Surely these changes were made by a penitent man, but they, while not planned, were accounted for in advance.

PENTIMENTO AS DETECTIVE



*fig. 05-06, analysis of pentimento done by
Harry Cooper*
source : Cooper, 2001.

SOUND AS ARCHITECTURE

SOUND AS ARCHITECTURE

SOUND BOX P. ZUMTHOR

Zumthor set out to accomplish a total work of architecture for the Swiss pavilion at the Expo 2000 in Hanover, and that is just what he accomplished. The open air structure consists mainly of carefully stacked lumber with no fixtures save a tensioned steel cage and positioned gutters, microphones, speakers and special rooms that break in program and form and material from the rest of the exhibition. Essentially it is a labyrinth and path with no obvious outcome. There are rotating musicians playing live variations of a theme written for the exhibition. The structure takes advantage of wood's acoustic properties in a very natural way. The design team and composers and musicians built a mock up prior to the exhibition that they re sized and tweaked intuitively avoiding scientific calculations and metering and instead relying on a response of the human to the space and the sound. The wood also carries with it a cultural presence as a signifier of Swiss identity. The whole exhibition is meant to act as ambassador of Swiss culture in its special cuisine and folk instruments, materiality, and even the garbs of the musicians. The pavilion stands in stark contrast to the other exhibits which were multitudes of sensory overload and technological gadgetry. This pavilion uses sound color and form to provide respite from the fatigue of the senses amplified especially in an exhibit setting, and invites the viewer/inhabitant to come away with some sense of place regardless of geography yet specific in definitive qualities. (Zumthor, 2000)



fig. 07, Swiss Pavilion, Peter Zumthor
source : Zumthor, 2000.



fig. 08, Swiss Pavilion, Peter Zumthor
source : Zumthor, 2000.

SOUND AS ARCHITECTURE

LE POEME ELECTRONIQUE L. CORBUSIER

Le Corbusier oversaw the Phillips pavilion which had been mathematically designed as a series of hyperbolic paraboloids by his colleague Iannis Xenakis. In addition he composed all of the visual slides, colors, and montages that were projected on the interior in relation to the musical score arranged by Edgard Varese. The score is dissonant and full of “noise” as a liberation of sound. The score is a little over 8 minutes long and plays in a loop along with the film. Loudspeakers mounted, again with acoustic strategy but also with composition in mind, throughout the pavilion relay the music which was previously recorded on the then brand new and experimental three-track recorder. The images are cast on the angled walls with the latest in imaging technology from the pavilion’s sponsor: Phillips. The architecture, noise, image, and color all work together with the same end in mind presenting newness as a celebration but also as a transformative space of which the viewer/ inhabitant will come away altered. (Le Corbusier, 1958)

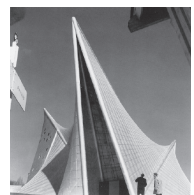
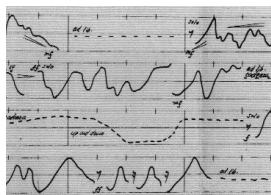


fig. 09-12, *Le Poeme Electronique*,
Phillips Pavilion, Le Corbusier
source : Le Corbusier, 1958

SOUND AS ARCHITECTURE

THE STUDIO AS SUBJECT MATTER

Bruce Nauman set up surveillance cameras in his studio where they recorded very little activity overnight while the studio was not in use, save an occasional cat and mouse game. Silence is a prerogative for the gallery experience and Nauman creates a silence that is so overwhelming that it borders on becoming a soundtrack. The studio has been for quite a while the subject matter for artists. Primarily because it is a form of portraiture expanded. The most revealing things about an artist or an artwork can be found in the spaces which they are made or inspired. In Nauman's case he presents the viewer with stillness and quiet and the viewer in turn watches waiting for something to happen. Gallery goer is transformed into night-watchman and the allure of this voyeurism is hard to deny. What is special about this studio investigation is that it is equally revealing to the artist himself as to what he cannot see and thusly a compelling take on the artistic conscious and the unconsciousness. (Rose, 2006)



fig. 13-16, *Untitled Installation*, Bruce Nauman
source : ArtForum, 2002.

SOUND AS ARCHITECTURE

SOUND AS SUBJECT MATTER

In the film *Sound???* Rahsaan Roland Kirk walks over a hilltop and descends into the London Zoo all the while carrying and playing multiple reeded instruments at a chaotic frenzied pace. The camera shifts to and swirls around a collected cool John Cage. He is carrying a book and recites, "Is it high? Is it low? Is it in the middle? Is it soft? Is it loud?... Does it communicate anything? Must it? If its high, does it? If its low does it? Is it a sound? If so is it music? Is music the word I mean; is that a sound? If it is, is 'music' music?"

In John Cages, "The Future of Music" he acknowledges the percussive priority of jazz," Percussion music is a contemporary transition from keyboard- influenced music to the all-sound music of the future. Any sound is acceptable to the composer of percussion music; he explores the academically forbidden "non-musical" field of sound insofar as is manually possible." (Brown, 2007)



fig. 17-20, Stills from the film "Sounds???", John Cage
source : Brown, 2007.

ORTHOGONAL AS MUSICAL

ORTHOGONAL AS MUSICAL

THE HAND CHANGING, CHANGES ALL



The horizontal motion of the left hand is the repetitive element that sets boogie woogie apart. The piano is metamorphosized into a percussive element. Devoid of the trappings of melody or harmony the keys reveal their true nature as figurehead for the hammers behind.

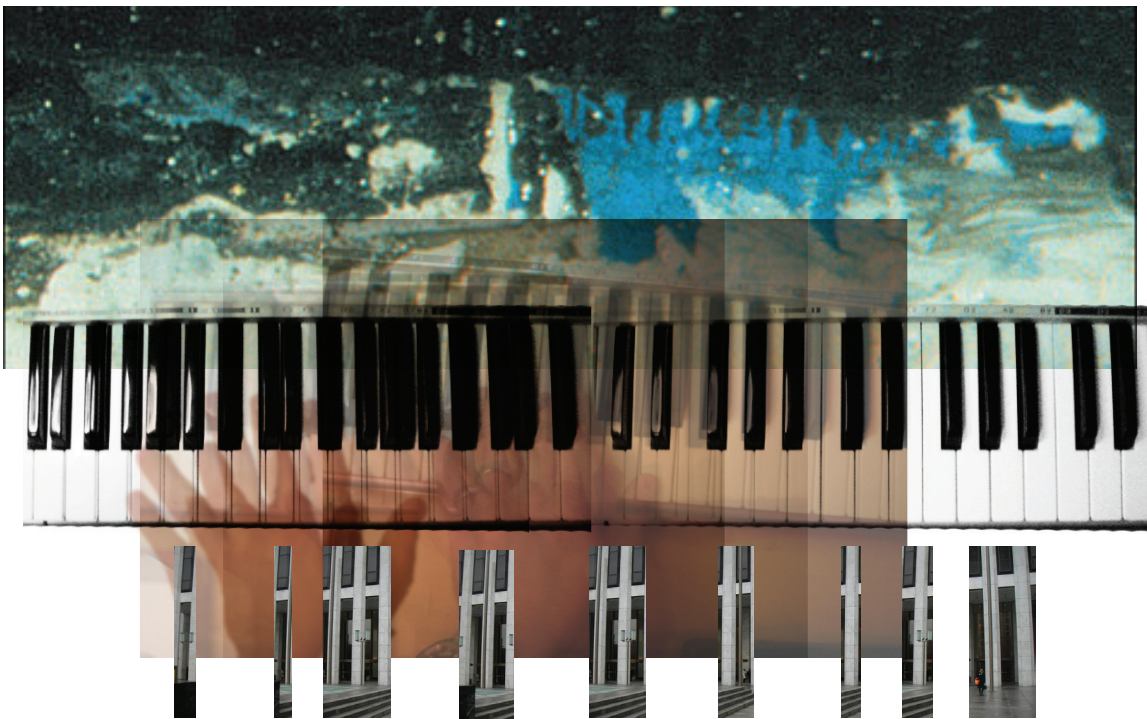


fig. 21, montage
source : author.

ORTHOGONAL AS MUSICAL

THE STANDING BASS, THE BLUE NOTE



They call it walking the bass. The hand could be traced in a motion that would look just as it sounds. Upwards and downwards the upright bass is a strictly vertical element. The instrument shaped like a pear. A visual and auditory direct translation of the appearance of notes on a piece of paper.

fig. 22, montage
source : author.

ORTHOGONAL AS MUSICAL

THE FOUNT OF EVERY BLESSING

The power of the rotational movement is not lost on the boogie drummer. The swirl of the left hand unites all that can be found and the dotted pattern of the right hand lets loose that which wishes to be lost. Now that I'm saved, I wish I was damned.

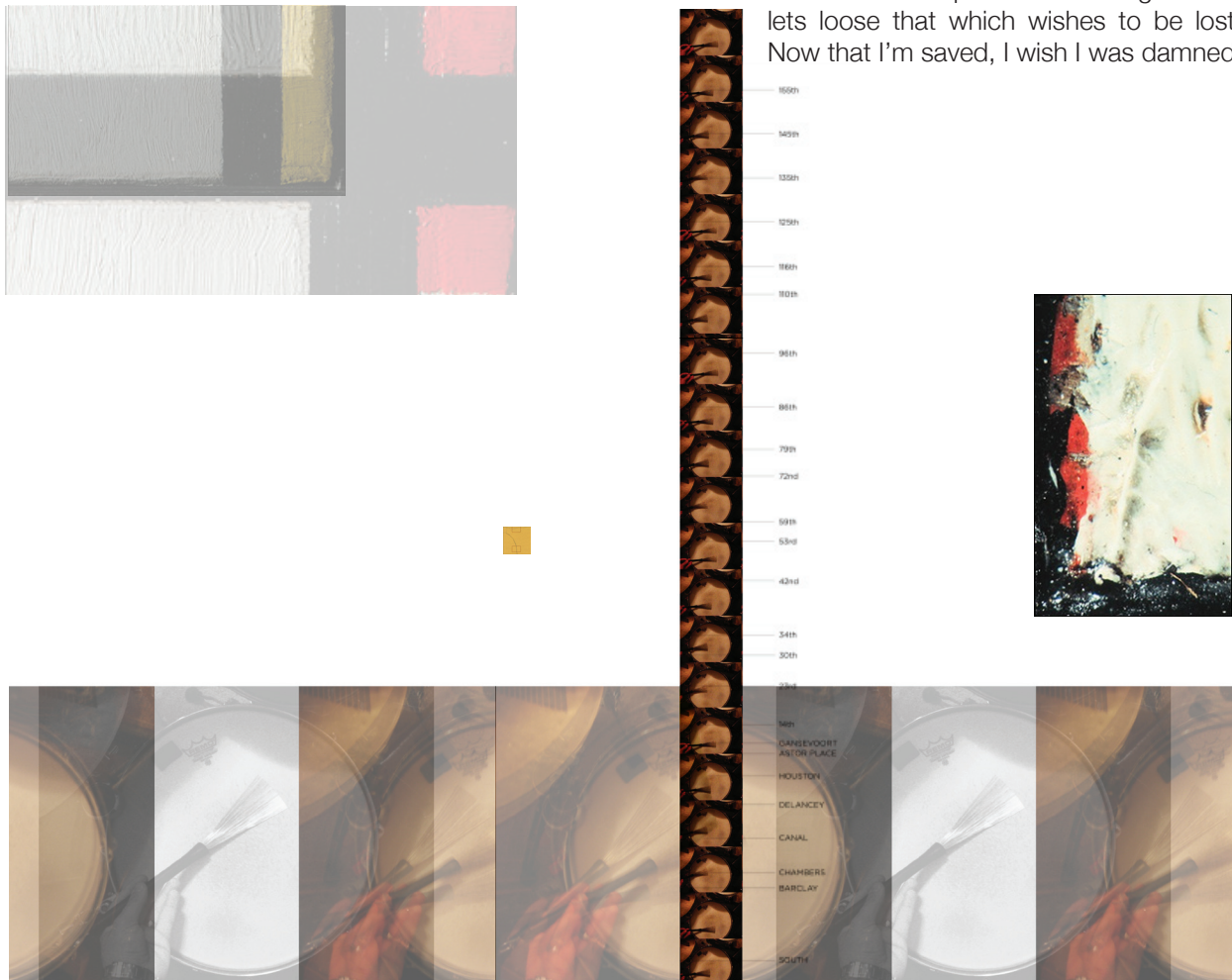


fig. 23, montage
source : author.

SITE AS SETTING

SITE AS SETTING

DISPERSION OF CULTURE

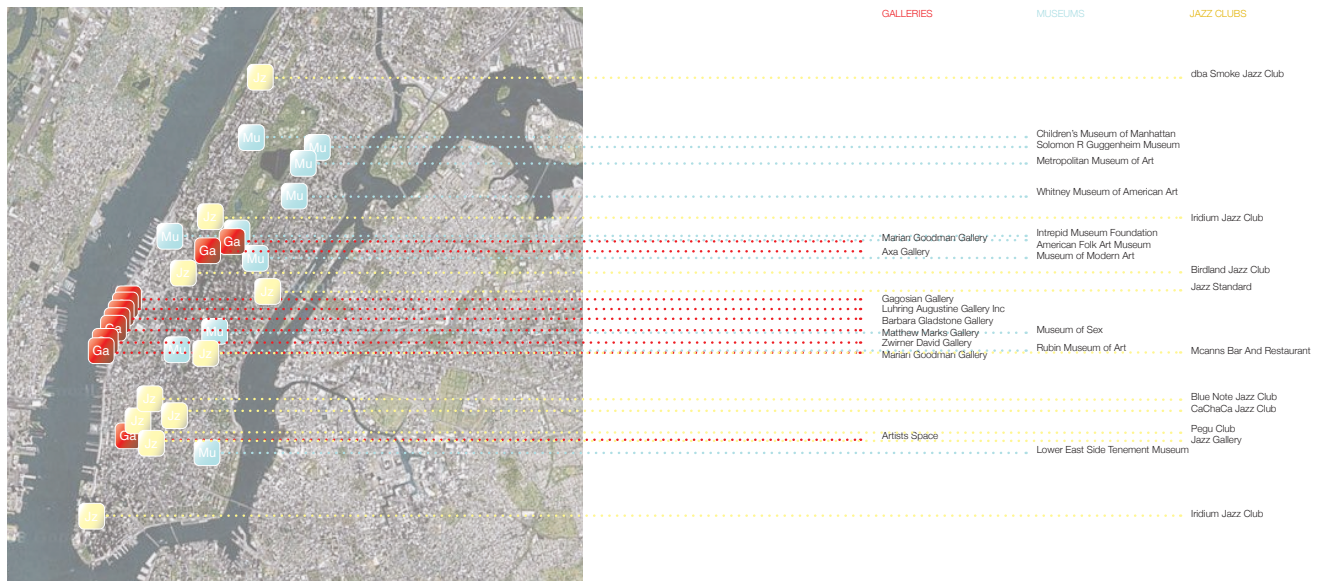


fig. 24, montage
source : author.



fig. 25-29, Views of the Site. The Island. The City. The park. The Roof.
source : google maps.

SITE AS SETTING

15 E 59th ST.

My sight geographically marks the address where Mondrian lived and worked in New York. At the site in the forties was an extended stay hotel/ apartment building, the Hotel Savoye. That building no longer exists, and on the site in 1964 General Motors hired Durell Stone to design the 50 floored 700 ft skyscraper that stands there today. The iconic building marks for many the entrance and anchor for Central Park. At it's ground level there is the famous FAO Schwartz toy store and the new Apple Store. Last year the building sold for \$2.8 billion making it the most expensive real estate in all of America.

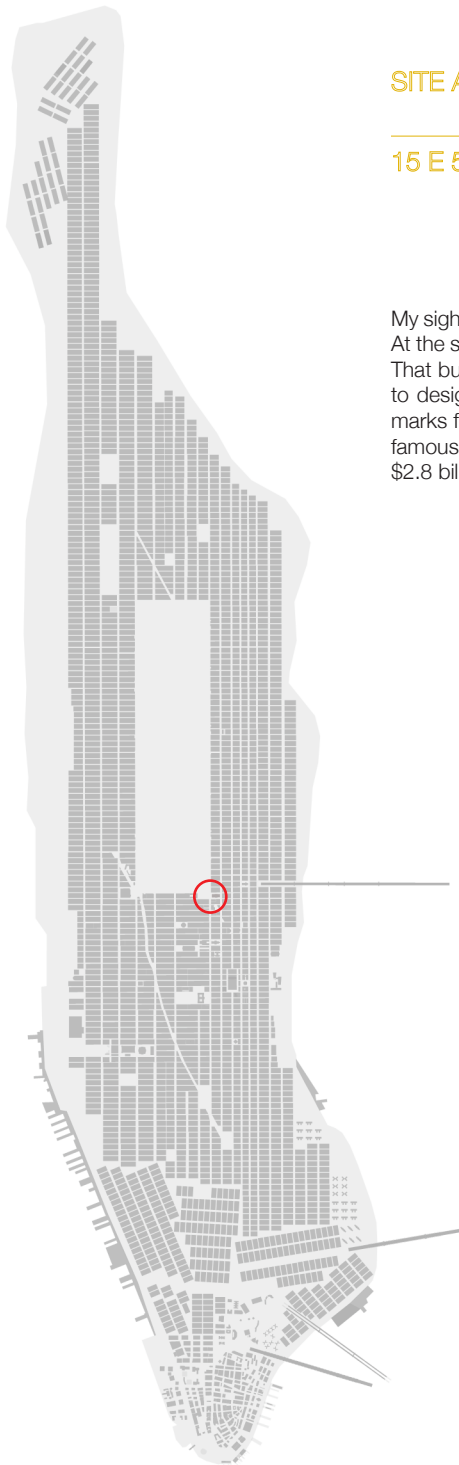


fig. 30, plan of manhattan
source : author, computer model provided by UTK college of architecture and design.

fig. 31-33, views of General Motors Building
source : google images.

SITE AS SETTING

LONGITUDINAL SITE SECTIONS



fig. 34, section through Park Avenue, entire island of Manhattan
source : author.



fig. 35, section through Fifth Avenue, entire island of Manhattan
source : author.



fig. 36, section through Madison Avenue, entire island of Manhattan
source : author.

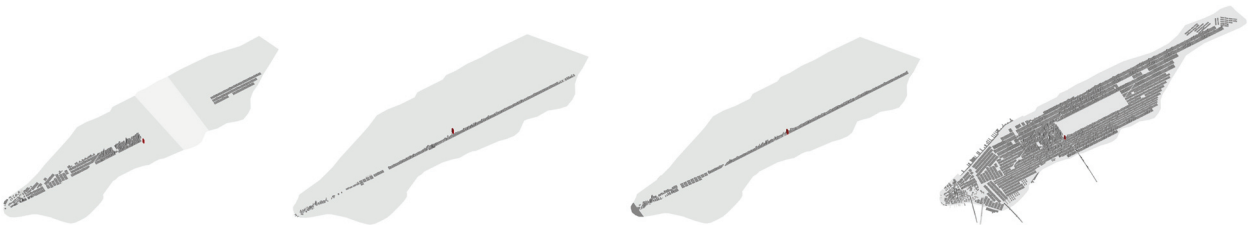


fig. 37-40, axonometric of Park Avenue, Fifth Avenue, and Madison Avenue, entire island
source : author.



fig. 41, perspective from site.
source : author.

SITE AS SETTING

TRANSVERSE SITE SECTIONS



fig. 42, section through 58th Street, entire island of Manhattan
source : author.



fig. 43, section through 59th Street, entire island of Manhattan
source : author.



fig. 44, section through 60th Street, entire island of Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridge
source : author.



fig. 45-48, axonometrics of transverse sections.
source : author.

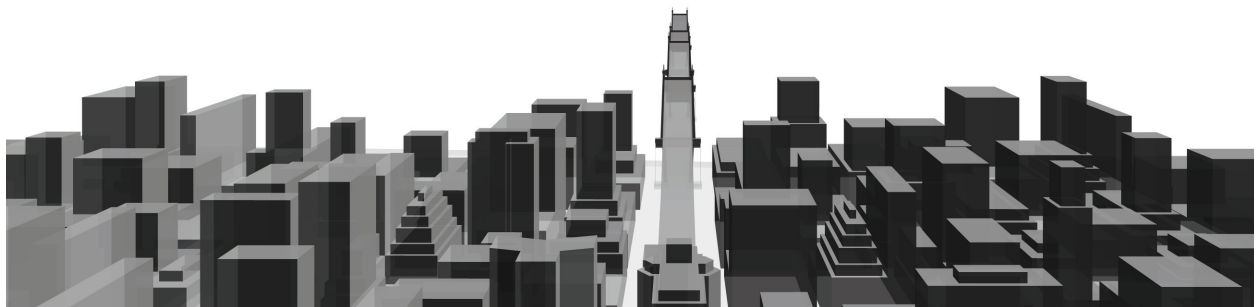


fig. 49, perspective from site, looking at bridge.
source : author.

GALLERY AS OBSERVATORY



fig. 50, American Museum of Folk Art.
source : google images.



fig. 51, The New Museum
source : google images.

GALLERY AS OBSERVATORY

One of the fundamental aspects of New York is the observatory. This is a typology that is synonymous with the city and one of the ways in which many think of the city is from above. As Michel De Certeau said, "it is hard to be down when you are up." Most tourist visiting New York will gravitate towards one of the many observation decks on its skyscrapers.

One of the other main attractions of New York is that it is a cultural center. The center of the art world, New York attracts multitudes to varying gallery and museum spaces. These are laboratories set up for the observation of objects. As of late the meta- museum or all encompassing museum has fallen by the wayside to some degree. This is primarily because it has been achieved so perfectly by institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Even institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim, and the Whitney are becoming more and more focused on specialization and rely on thematic curated temporary shows. The trend has expanded beyond the parameters of the major museums and a new breed of specialized gallery has emerged at the forefront of both architectural thought and museum-goer destination. The Museum of American Folk Art and the DIA foundation in both Chelsea and Beacon offer collections geared at a certain audience. They also offer an alternative in their scale alone, generally smaller they afford an urban museum experience that does not have the trappings of gallery fatigue and over-stimuli that one can easily experience at the Met or the Guggenheim.

The other invariable draw of the city is the music scene and the night life. The observatory here takes on a different meaning in the presense of such mainstays as Lincoln Center or the famous jazz club, Birdland. The city that never sleeps is kept awake by the music from every genre conceivable. The same streets that produced the boogie-woogie Mondrian was so fond of would also prove to deliver the world the be-bop of Charlie Parker, the hard-bop of Art Blakey, the incomparable John Coltrane, bohemian folk by the way of Bob Dylan, the street smart avant garde of the Velvet Underground, the blistering punk of the Ramones, the invention of hip hop from the likes of Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five to hip hops classical and minimal incarnation from Run DMC. The list goes on.

What these three things have in common is New York. What is missing is what these three seemingly disparate urban atmospheres could benefit through combination. I am proposing a floating bar above the General motors building that would share circulation and structure with the tower but be light enough to occupy the air-rights of the skyscraper. This building would hold an archive of Mondrian materials and be a comprehensive research center with his writings and readings about him. There would be a symmetry to the rest of the program consisting of equal parts gallery and jazz club, as predicted by Mondrian himself. There would be a permanent gallery that would be fairly large with to be complemented by a musical observatory that could accommodate the big bands of the boogie woogie era to orchestral pieces. Then there would also be a smaller temporary gallery that would double as a smaller music venue/ dance hall. The key to this combination would be a collaboration between the auditory and visual artists and also an architecture that would be adaptable to their varying needs, one that could improvise and syncopate to the varying needs of the artistic conscious and the tempo of the street while maintaining abstract relevance just as in the transformative works that Mondrian did on this very site over sixty years ago.

GALLERY AS OBSERVATORY

SPACE BETWEEN THE FOUR AND THE DOWNBEAT

The ultimate landscape for the modernist has to that of the sky. All things blend into one. Immaterial and scaleless, the sky when isolated from the horizon line the image of the sky is simultaneously all and nothing. There is a strange forboding presense to the sky when the cone of vision is limited to just the atmosphere and that feeling can only be paralleled by the calming union with the universal that one would expect.

New York exists as much through viewfinders as the stone of which it is hewn. The act of seeing in a gallery is not unlike the function of the observatory deck. There is often a price for admission, a chance to take in the whole picture from a far and then the close up. Nearly every viewer in a gallery setting brings their face in dangerous proximity to the painted surface, this is of course one of the main benefits of seeing in person. Just as atop the skyscraper the viewer takes it all in, then inserts a quarter and sublimates their eyes into a new pair of mechanical ones where they peer out into the city. The ultimate act of voyeurism primarily because there is zero stigma or guilt as compared to a pair of binoculars, and often when in a metropolis such as New York the best thing to look at is the myriad of other observation decks at the same hieght and another pair of mechanical eyes looking back at you.

If the sky is the ultimate modernist view than the streetscape would be the antithesis. The street with its bustle and vitality and mess, is of course what Mondrian sought to remove completely from art. But this is also a symbol for the culture that could not be denied by the master himself and sneakily made its way back into his compositions at the end of his life. The one thing that is invariable for those not too afraid of hieghts and often for those who are in an observation deck the viewer will walk up to the glass and lean their foreheads and stare down. The world is dimnuitive and all is calm with the knowledge that the glass will save your life, but their is the possibility in your mind of it giving way just this once. Michel de Certeau said that it is hard to be down when you are up but it could also be said that it is hard to be lofty when you are looking straight down.

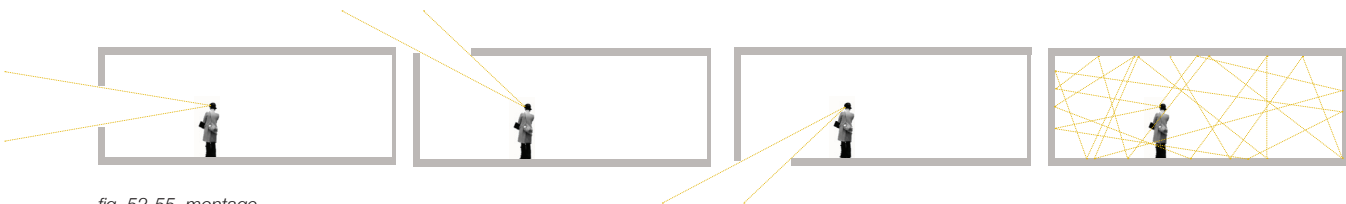


fig. 52-55, montage
source : author.

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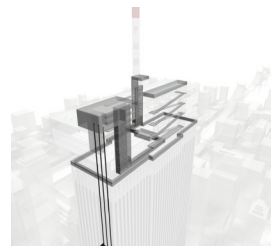
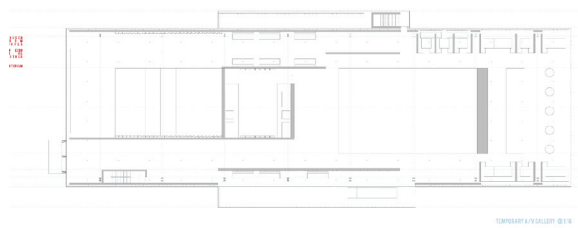
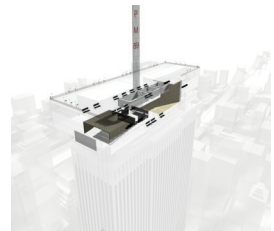
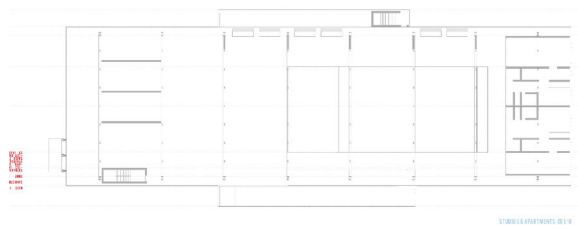
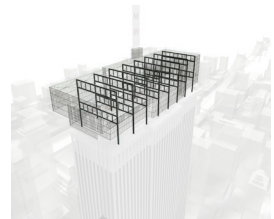
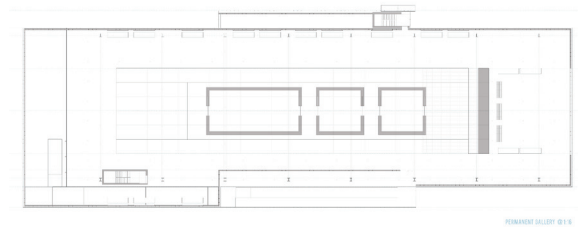
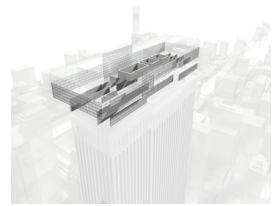
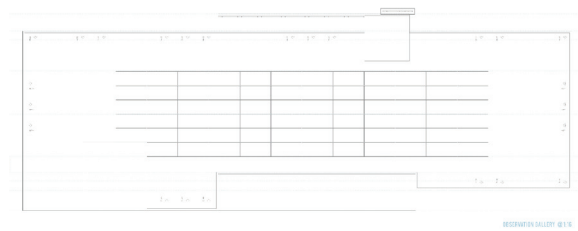


fig. 56-60 ,floor plans and diagrams
source : author.

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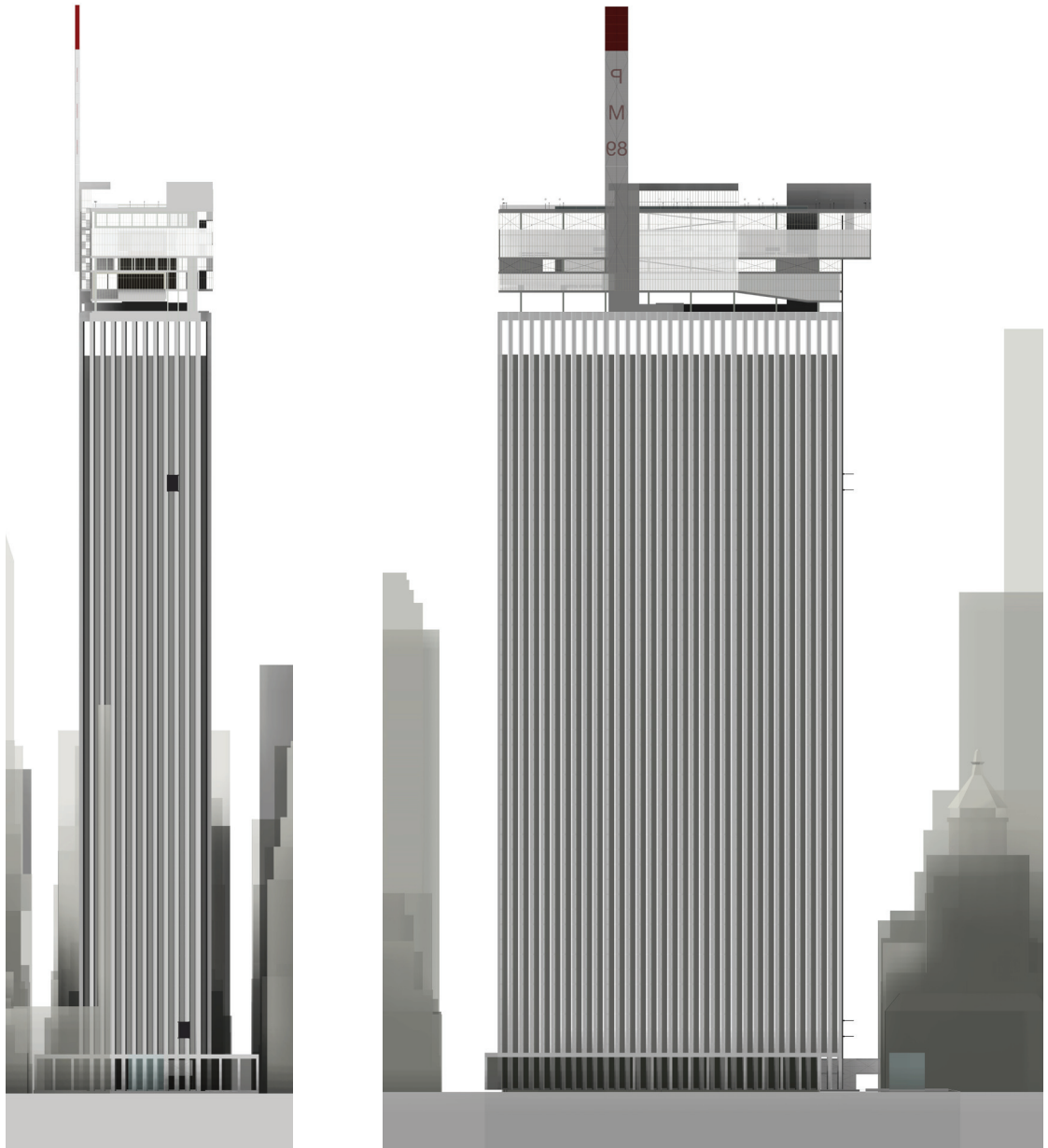


fig. 61-62 .elevations.
source : author.

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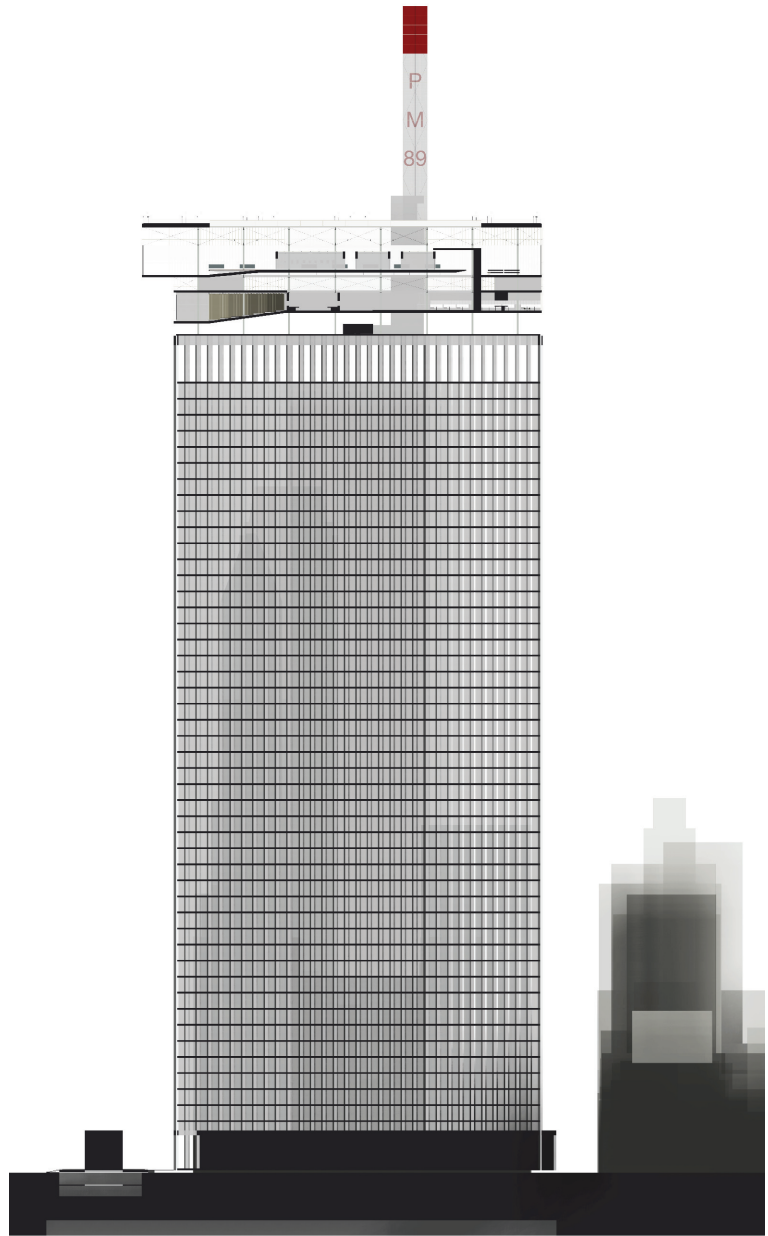
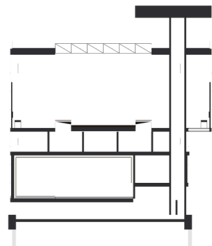
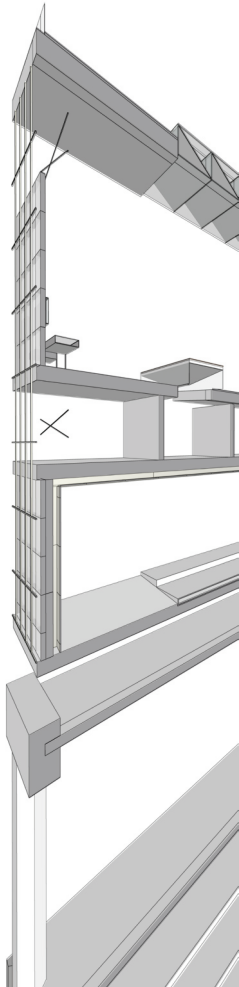


fig. 63-65 .section and section detail.
source : author.

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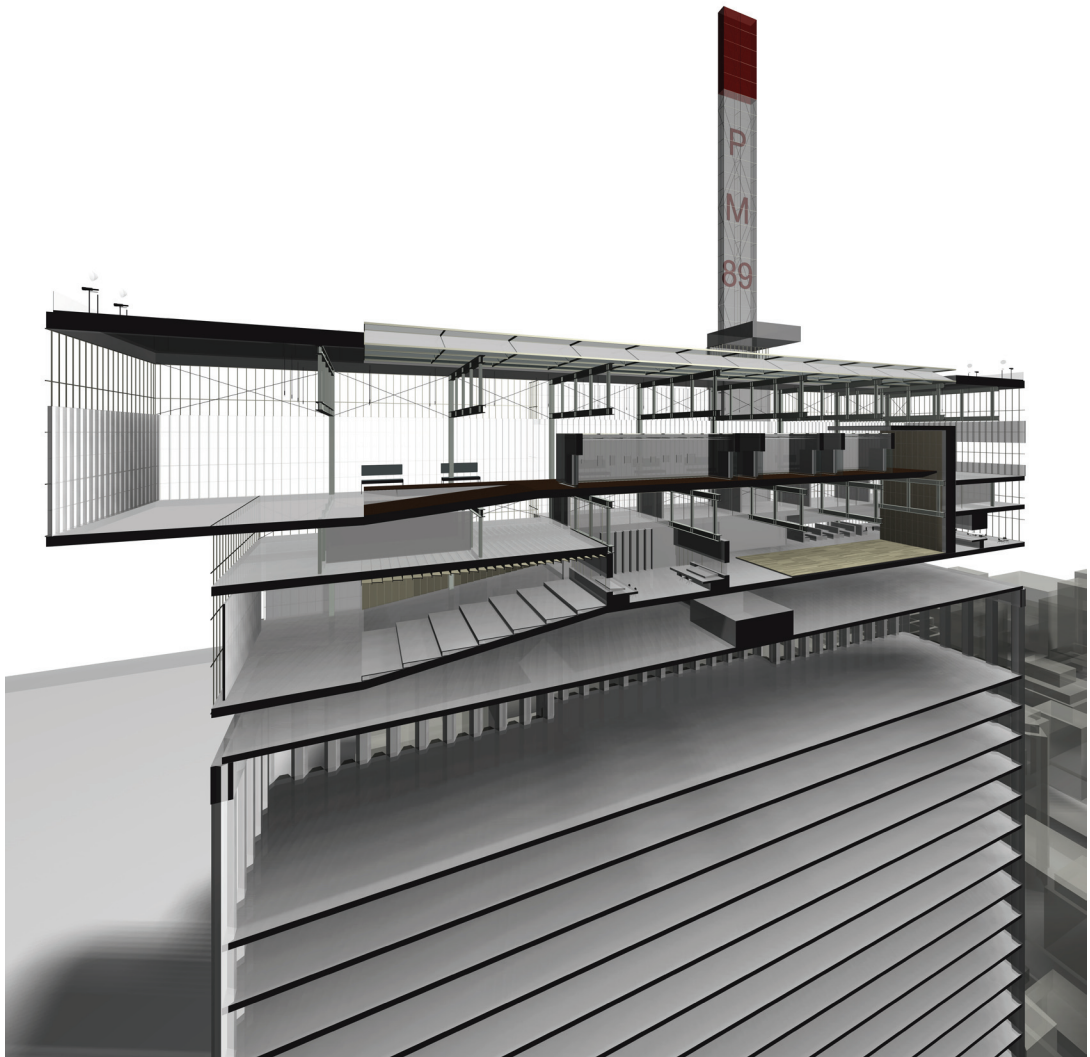


fig. 66.sectional perspective.
source : author.

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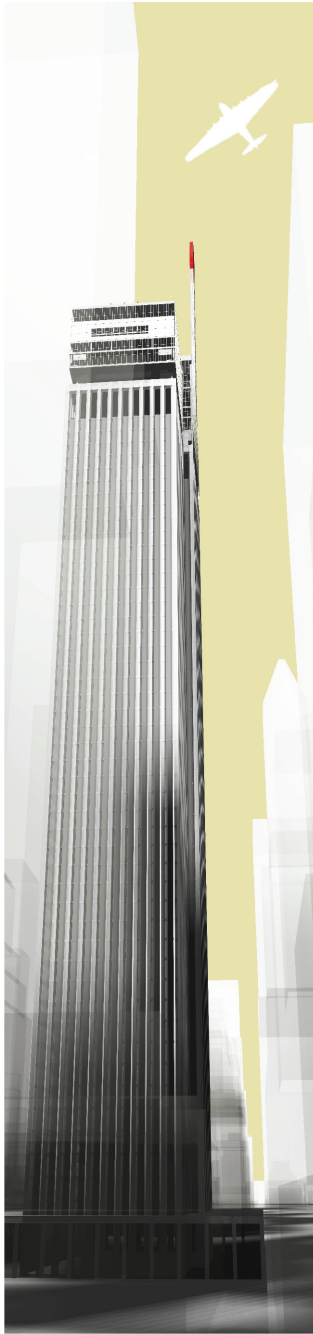


fig. 67-68 .exterior perspectives.
source : author.

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fig. 69. night view.
source : author.

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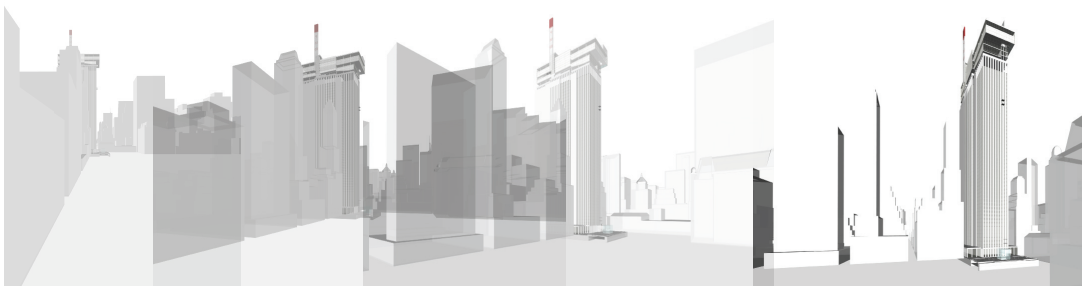
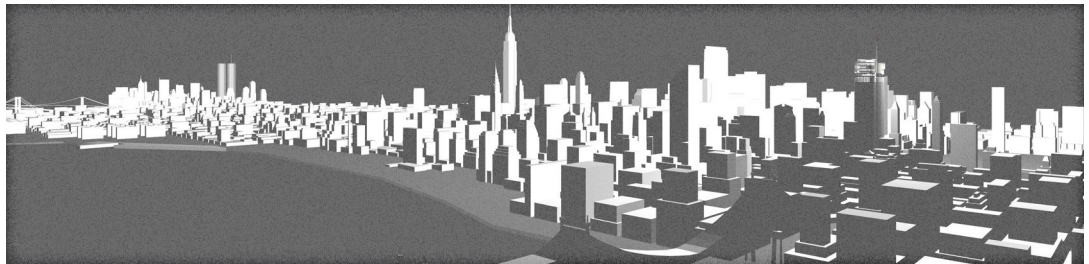


fig. 70-72. entry and site views.
source : author.

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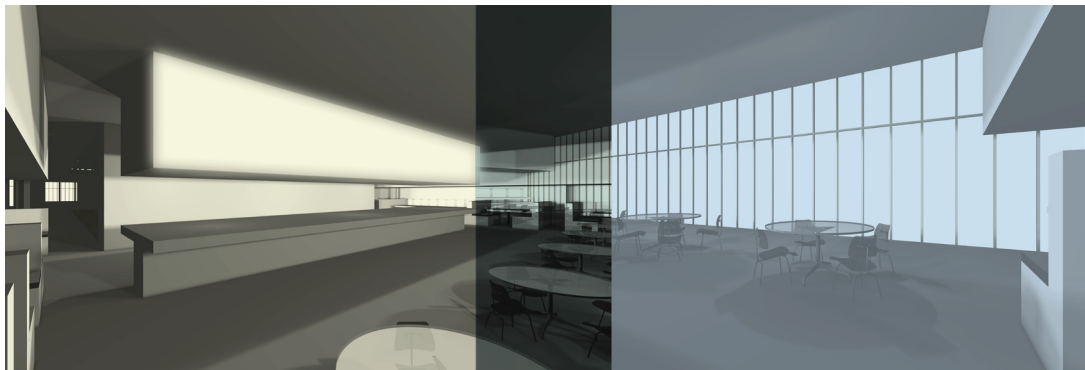
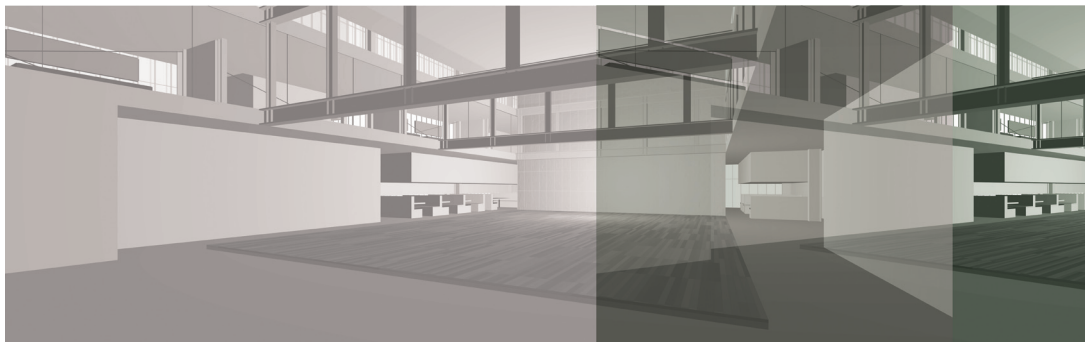
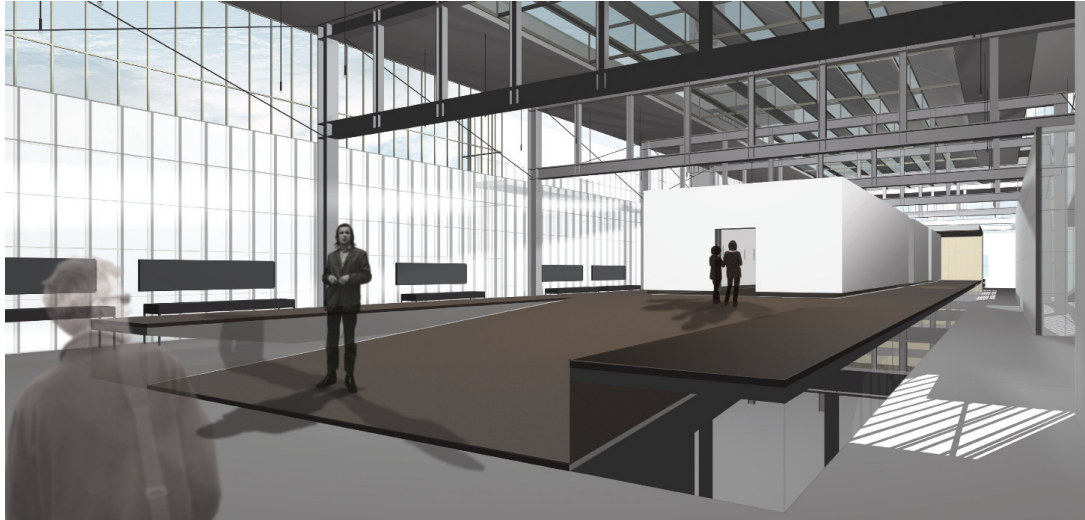


fig. 73-75. interior perspectives, gallery, bandstand, and 12 bar.
source : author.

APPENDIX



fig. 76-78. installation views
source : author.

VITA

My name is Chuck Draper and I was born in Cookeville Tennessee. I have lived in Tennessee for thirty years. During that time I have received a Bachelor of Fine Arts with a concentration in Painting and Drawing from the University of Tennessee Chattanooga and now a Masters of Architecture from the University of Tennessee Knoxville. I am a record enthusiast and jazz drummer. I am obsessed with the color white and revel in elementary geometries. I believe that ninety degrees is the correct angle. I believe in a design for life. The smartest thing I ever did was marry the lovely Mrs. Bethany Broadwater Draper.